

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 HA-05 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /097 W
-----056902 200247Z /75

R 181634Z NOV 77
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO SECSTATE WASHC 9001
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 8339

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP, AG, TU, MO, MR, SS
SUBJECT: UNLIKELY PROSPECT OF TUNISIAN MEDIATION IN
WESTERN SAHARA DISPUTE

REF: ALGIERS 2897 (DTG: 141655Z NOV 77)

1. WE ARE UNAWARE OF ANY TUNISIAN INTENTION TO INTERMEDIATE IN THE WESTERN SAHARA DISPUTE, DESPITE AMBASSADOR MAAMOURI'S REMARKS REPORTED IN REFTEL. IN FACT WE WERE TOLD RECENTLY BY A HIGH MOFA AND SECURITY OFFICIALS THAT GOT CONTINUES TO VIEW PROBLEM AS ONE WHICH THE PLAYERS THEMSELVES MUST RESOLVE.

2. THIS IS NOT TO SAY, HOWEVER, THAT GOT IS DISINTERESTED IN OUTCOME OF DISPUTE OR UNAWARE OF ITS SERIOUSNESS. TUNISIA CLEARLY WOULD LIKE TO SEE DISPUTE RESOLVED QUICKLY BECAUSE OF DANGERS IT PRESENTS TO AREA STABILITY IN
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GENERAL AND TO TUNISIAN INTERESTS IN PARTICULAR. GOT DOES NOT HAVE PARTICULARLY HIGH REGARD FOR OULD DADDAH REGIME NOR DOES IT HAVE ANY SIGNIFICANT INTERESTS IN MAURITANIA. ALGERIA AND MOROCCO PRESENT DIFFERENT SITUATIONS, AND TUNISIA DOES HAVE CLOSE TIES AND/OR COMMON INTERESTS WITH BOTH COUNTRIES. GOT SHARES WITH KING HASSAN'S GOVERNMENT THE SAME GENERALLY MODERATE OUTLOOK, AND THERE IS A LONG

HISTORY OF TUNISIAN-MOROCCAN COOPERATION ON BUTH BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL ISSUES. AT SAME TIME, TUNISIA'S RELATIONS WITH ALGERIA ARE IMPROVING AND GOT GIVES GREAT IMPORTANCE TO TRANS-TUNISIA-ALGERIA-SICILY GAS PIPELINE, AS AGREED UPON LAST SUMMER. THIS PROJECT IS OF PARTICULAR ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE TO TUNISIA AND GOT IS OBVIOUSLY CONCERNED THAT OPEN CONFLICT COULD DELAY COMPLETION OF PROJECT OR EVEN PUT WHOLE PIPELINE SCHEME INTO QUESTION.

3. AS TO BOURGUIBA'S TELEGRAMS TO BOUMEDIENE, HASSAN AND OULD DADDAH, EMBASSY HAS NOT GIVEN THIS INTERVENTION MUCH IMPORTANCE. SIMILAR MESSAGES HAVE BEEN SENT IN PAST WITHOUT ANY MEANINGFUL GOT FOLLOW UP AND WITHOUT ANY APPARENT RESULTS. MAIN EMPHASIS OF THREE IDENTICAL MESSAGES APPEARED TO BE APPEAL FOR RESTRAINT AND FOR RECONCILIATION FROM ALL PARTIES, AND THIS HAS BEEN STANDING GOT POLICY SINCE EARLY 1976.

4. ALSO, WE NOTED THAT MESSAGES WERE SENT VIRTUALLY ON EVE OF ARAB FOREIGN MINISTERS CONFERENCE WHICH OPENED IN H TUNIS ON NOV 12. WE KNOW FROM PERSONAL DISCUSSIONS WITH FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS THAT GOT WAS DEEPLY CONCERNED THAT SAHARA ISSUE MIGHT BREAK INTO OPEN DURING CONFERENCE. SUCH OPEN DEMONSTRATION OF HOSTILITY BETWEEN ALGERIA AND MOROCCO WOULD HAVE DOOMED ANY CHANCE THAT CONFERENCE CONFIDENTIAL

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COULD BE DECLARED A SUCCESS, AND TUNISIA, AS HOST, VERY MUCH SAW ITS PRESTIGE ON LINE. WE KNOW THAT TUNISIA WAS DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO ENSURE THAT CONFERENCE COULD INDEED CLAIM THAT IT HAD ACHIEVED ITS PURPOSE OF "REESTABLISHING ARAB SOLIDARITY" AND BOURGUIBA'S MESSAGES SEEM TO US TO HAVE BEEN LITTLE MORE THAN ONE ASPECT OF THIS GENERAL POLICY.

5. EMBASSY IS UNABLE TO COMMENT ON SIGNALS BOUMEDIENE MIGHT HAVE INTENDED TO GIVE IN HIS RESPONSE TO BOURGUIBA. WE SERIOUSLY DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT GOT HAS ANY INTENTION OF GETTING ITSELF EMBROILED IN THIS DANGEROUS CONFLICT, NO MATTER HOW MUCH TUNISIA WOULD LIKE TO SEE IT RESOLVED. WE ALSO THINK IT UNLIKELY THAT TUNISIA WOULD TAKE THE LEAD IN FORMULATING ANY SOLUTION WHICH INVOLVES "SACRIFICE" OF MAURITANIA, AND THAT THIS ALSO WOULD BE LEFT UP TO ALGERIA AND MOROCCO. MULCAHY

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